643 Because of the mystical values associated with
783 the kingship and centred in the person of the king he must keep himself in a state of ritual purity, by performing certain actions and observing certain prescriptions, and in a state of physical perfection. Our authorities say that the Shilluk believe that should the king become physically weak the whole people might suffer, and, further, that if a king becomes sick or senile he should be killed to avoid some grave national misfortune, such as defeat in war, epidemic, or famine. The king must be killed to save the kingship and with it the whole Shilluk people.

643 This would seem to be the reasoning behind
783 Shilluk statements that the king may be strangled,
114 or suffocated, or walled up in a hut and left to die
[766] there, if he fails to satisfy his wives or shows signs of illness or senility. In view of the great importance Sir James Frazer and others have attached to these statements I must confess that I consider them of interest more as an indication of the mystical nature of the kingship than as evidence that the kings were, in fact, ever killed in the ways mentioned or for the reasons given. It is true that Professor and Mrs Seligman state categorically that 'there is not the least doubt that kings of the Shilluk were killed with due ceremony when they began to show

signs of old age or ill health',[1] but I have failed to find convincing evidence that any Shilluk king was put to death in either circumstance, although some of the kings must have qualified long before they died for execution on the grounds alleged; and I am persuaded that the story of kings being walled up in a hut is a confusion arising from the usual walling up of the remains of a dead king, the bones being buried after decomposition of the flesh. In the absence of other than traditional evidence of royal executions in Shilluk history and in view of the contradictory accounts cited I conclude that the ceremonial putting to death of kings is probably a fiction. It possibly arises from the dual personality of the king, who is both himself and Nyikang, both an individual and an institution, which accounts also for the linguistic convention that a king does not die but disappears just as Nyikang is said not to have died but to have disappeared, in his case in a storm. I will return to this question of regicide after I have reviewed the procedures of election and investiture of kings to show what light they shed on the nature of the kingship.

[1] *Report of the Wellcome Tropical Research Laboratories*, p. 221; also *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan*, pp. 90–2. Howell and Thomson say (*op. cit.* p. 19) that ceremonial strangulation is traditional for all members of the royal clan.

some of the beasts are sacrificed during the ceremonies and others are added to their personal herds. One must, therefore, beg the question whether those portions alleged to be the right of the *reth* were ritual fees of this nature rather than 'fines' as is so frequently stated. It is a question of interpretation, and I suggest that even though repressive action and the exaction of 'fines' may have occurred, with the backing of foreign Governments, during the latter half of the last century and the early years of the present Administration, the payments were ritual in origin and concerned the *reth*'s ritual function in society. The use of the word 'fine' appears to me to be inaccurate.

Ritual of Purification for Homicide

As among other Nilotic peoples, a Shilluk who has killed another must perform certain rites to cleanse him from impurity which might otherwise affect his kinsmen. This process involves, first, the letting of blood, which is carried out by a magical expert (*ajwogo*)[1] who makes a small incision on his right shoulder with a spear. This is known as *tai dhani*. Secondly, a small sacrifice is made (usually a sheep), the object of which is to remove the curse of the dead man's spirit. As among the Nuer and Dinka, the killer is not expected to eat or drink until this ritual has been performed.

Accidental Killing

Accidental killing (*agweny*) is apparently not regarded as a serious offence among the Shilluk, especially if the two parties are connected by kinship or by close association in one territory. Hofmayr says: 'Accidental killing requires only the sacrifice of an ox at a peace ceremony and no more.'[2] District records indicate that two head of cattle sometimes were paid. At the Shilluk Chiefs' Council in 1934 it is recorded that 'the Council do not know whether there is a definite law on this subject or not. The *reth* says that years ago it was two head of cattle, one to the relatives of the dead man, one to the *reth*. He himself suggests two head of cattle to go to the deceased's family. This is confirmed as law.' I do not think that any such fixed indemnity existed in the past, but that intention was recognized and accident accepted in mitigation of the offence. At any rate the indignation of the deceased's kinsmen would not be so acute, and they would be prepared to accept an indemnity less than that normally demanded for intentional homicide.

Bodily Injuries not causing Death

On the subject of bodily injuries less than death, the evidence is even less reliable than on homicide. It is evident that such injuries require the payment of compensation if retaliatory action is not to follow. At the same time it is perhaps surprising that among the Shilluk, unlike the Nuer and Dinka, there are no recognized injuries for which compensation is given on a definite scale. We hear that 'for injury' an immediate payment of one bull must be made as a guarantee of good faith. Subsequent settlement is made on a scale regulated by the severity of the ultimate damage and rising, in the case of blinding, to the same rate as for death. Apart from the problem of the *reth*'s intervention in matters of this sort, it may be assumed, in the absence of

amount to eight cattle out of a total of forty.

[1] *Ajwogo:* Magical expert or specialist. These persons are not comparable to the Nuer functionaries, such as the *kwar kwar*, but to the possessors of spirits (*gwan kwoth*). *Ajwogo* is a derivative of *Juok*, meaning God in Shilluk.

[2] Op. cit.

19: Howell & Thomson E, G-5 (1943-1944)1946
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obvious variation on the second day, though different contingents took part. On each day, at the close of the ceremonies the drummers whisked the drums from their holes and rushed them out of the village. This was a signal to the dancers to disperse, and they did so with great speed and with mock terror. The spirit of the late *reth* was said to return on the drums being drawn, and hands were clapped by the onlookers as before. On the last day, the holes in which the drums had been set up were immediately filled, and water poured over the spot, and a sheep was brought to the site. This sheep was not immediately sacrificed, but was ceremonially purified and led off to be slaughtered elsewhere.

PART II—ELECTION OF THE RETH.

(W.P.G.T.)

The *reth* of the Shilluk is elected from the body of surviving sons of those previous *reths* who have been properly installed in Fashoda. Difficulties arose in recent elections owing to pretenders seeking the throne, who were the sons of men who, although they were proclaimed *reth* by the government or compassed Fashoda of their own accord, had never been installed by Nyikang.

In 1943 these "illegitimate" lines had died out, and all *nyireths* were genuinely eligible for the position of *reth*.

Apart from the law that all *reths* must be the sons of previous *reths*, there is no other rule governing the election. It is more or less understood now, though not in former times, that surviving lines of *nyireths* take it in turn to provide a *reth*, though we think agreement has to be obtained for this. The families of three *reths*, Fafiti, Fadiet and Kur contained among them some thirty or forty *nyireths* all technically eligible for election excluding infant children of Fafiti. In 1943, the two surviving sons of *reth* Yor were not considered owing to old age (one of them had left the Shilluk country some years pre-

The same evening outside the shaiwe of Nyikang some of the Kwa Nyikwom were gathered and busily engaged in the spiritual decontamination of persons who had obstructed the passage of Nyikang on his march to Fashoda. These persons had incurred the displeasure of Nyikang, and were in grave danger of their lives, unless steps were taken by the Kwa Nyikwom to remove the curse by rites of purification. The two parties concerned were seated about two yards apart. Each had a potsherd filled with smouldering grass in front of him. The attendant member of the Kwa Nyikwom cut off about half an inch of the hippo whip he carried and burnt it in the embers. His victim them blew upon the embers, which burst into flame, but were extinguished with water. The ashes were removed and the victim anointed with them on the back, chest, palms and soles. For this privilege each handed over a chicken and a spear as a fine for a breach of traditional observance in hindering the path of Nyikang.

643 783 [372] [688]

THE MAKING OF NEW FIRE AT FASHODA.

Just before dusk a group of Ororo and Kwareth began to gather near one of the wind-screens at the side of the temporary camp. All fires in Fashoda had been extinguished. A wooden club of no special origin or sanctity was brought and the shaft of a spear detached from the blade. A small hole was pierced in the handle of the club, and the spearshaft sharpened to fit this hole. The ritual kindling of fire which followed was no different from the normal method of fire-making with sticks, except that several persons co-operated in twirling the shaft. One man held the club firmly to the ground, while each man twirled the shaft in turn, the hands of the second starting at the top of the shaft, as soon as the first man's hands had reached the middle. A continuous twirling motion was thus maintained. The tinder in the hole soon began to smoulder and grass was added and in a short time burst into flames. The fact that no difficulty had been encountered and that the fire had been kindled quickly was regarded as a good omen. Men and women who had been sitting nearby came up to light their pipes from the fire, and embers were carried off in all directions to relight the fires of Fashoda. The making

643 372 643 643 [787] [206]

[i.e., the day of the enthronement of the Reth. - Analyst]

20; Thomson G-5 (1945-1946) 1948 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

643 The next day December 30th, *Adul*, the temporary camp outside Fashoda, was built by Jago Yorleiker. This time he built both huts, and the chief of Gol Dhiang had no part.

On the 31st the *reth* and Nyikang were ready for the installation ceremonies. Nyikang and his army left Nyigir at about 9.00 a.m. and went straight to the village north of Fashoda, where they had to wait some two hours for the *reth* to start from Debalo. The army of Nyikang moved steadily this time and seldom turned back in countermarch as it had done in 1944. The *reth* was delayed ceremonially till about midday. His form of procession was similar to 1944, and the cattle which were bride-wealth for Nyakwer were observed being driven along beside his army.

There had been an abnormal White Nile flood in 1946, as in 1917 at the time of the installation of *reth* Fafiti, and the Khor Arepajur, which was dry in March 1944, was now an expanse of water about 80 yards wide. When the *reth* arrived at the khor, the *Golbainy* dragged the small black bull to the southern bank. The *reth*, taking Nyakwer by the hand, stepped over the bull and into a canoe. He was paddled across the khor with Nyakwer sitting behind him, while his followers forded the stream.

As the two parties of Nyikang and the *reth* approached each other Nyikang dashed forward and captured the *reth* without a struggle and began at once to carry him off to Cerfuc (op. cit. p.p. 61 & 78) Fashoda. This corresponded with Munro's observation in 1918 (*Sudan Notes & Records* Vol. I), but not with what we had seen in 114 643 669 541 there had been a spectacular mock battle with millet stalks. I was told that they had "made a mistake" in 1944, and also that owing to the hardness of the millet stalks they were afraid of injuring someone. This latter reason had not cancelled the fight in 1944. There is another possible reason: the *reth* himself was feeling in a state of acute personal danger, owing, as he thought, to the likelihood of someone making an attack on his life. He may have issued orders at the last moment that the battle was not to take place, in case someone should take advantage of the confusion to attack him. This seems more possible because the *reth's* army were all carrying millet stalks as they crossed the khor, as if in preparation for the mock battle.

643 The rest of the ceremonies closely followed precedent. *Reth* Dak, while enthroned on the stool was "possessed" by Nyikang, in the [196] same way as *reth* Anei had been. He was afterwards led away to seclusion in *Adul* leading Nyakwer by the hand. An incident which [783] may be of interest occurred while the *reth* was being led to *Adul*. The

20: Thomson G-5 (1945-1946) 1948 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

sheep over which he had to step on entering *Adul*, defaecated on the way. The man holding the sheep picked up the droppings and rubbed them on the sheep's back. After he had done so he made gestures showing that he had restored the situation, indicating that the sheep was no longer defiled.

For the following account of the final ceremonies I am indebted to Mr. H. A. Nicholson, then Deputy Governor Upper Nile, with whom I witnessed them.

The final ceremonies of the installation of the new *reth* of the Shilluk took place at Fashoda on 3rd and 4th January. This time there were no large crowds, but only the chiefs and leading notables and the attendants of Nyikang and the *reth*.

On the evening of the 2nd, the *reth* had come out of the special grass hut into which he had been led with the small girl, his symbolic bride, Nyakwer, 'the girl of the ceremonies,' after the spirit of Nyikang had entered into him and he had been ritually seated on the sacred stool or throne. He had come out to go up into Athudowic, the hill of the throne, the great mound which dominates Fashoda, on which are set the four sacred houses which constitute the shrine of the Shilluk kings. With him was a girl, but it was not his bride. In accordance with tradition her place had been taken by a girl of the Ororo clan who had enticed him away. Next morning, when he discovered this, the *reth* sent out to search for his wife, and eventually learnt that she had been taken by Nyikang to his shrine. He sent envoys to ask for her return, and when Nyikang refused, he came out, stepped over a sheep, marched down the hill with his army, stepped over a grey-white bull and challenged Nyikang to battle. Nyikang's drum was then heard, sounding a distinctive beat, the lion call, and Nyikang accompanied by his sons Dak and Cal (a smaller figure made of the grey feathers of a female ostrich) came out from his shrine at the head of his army. After marching round his shrine, from right to left, he advanced to meet the *reth* and his party, who were waiting on the open ground in the middle of the village. Twice Nyikang advanced towards the *reth* and retired again to march round the shrine, while his drum sounded a new insistent beat. The third time the armies joined battle armed with millet stalks, and also, in the case of Nyikang's men, with special rope whips. This time the *reth* prevailed, and seizing Nyakwer who was with Nyikang's army, drew her with him at a run up into the hill, while Nyikang and his men withdrew to his shrine at the other side of the village.

Next morning the stage was set for the last act, the *kel long*

22: Howell E-5 (1951) 1952 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

766 [782] The *ororo* then went to fetch the body from Debwor. The remains were put in a special bag made from the hide of a cow-calf sacrificed for the occasion and wrapped in white cloth and the party set out for Kujo, travelling by night and with an advance guard who were entitled to seize small gifts and ransoms from those unfortunate enough to cross their path.[1]

[782] On the arrival of the party at Kujo an ox was sacrificed as *akadh* (a sacrifice to allow them to enter the village) and the remains of *reth* Dak were brought into the *gol dwong*, by now transformed into his *kengo*. The grave was then dug inside one of the two huts[2] and on the second day *heglig* wood (*Balanites aegyptica*) was cut and a new bier (*pam*) was constructed, bound with leather thongs taken from the hide of the ox sacrificed as *akadh*. On this the remains were placed, lowered into the grave and buried. Immediately [533] afterwards the chief (*jago*) of the *ororo* came out singing the song of Nyikang which is the usual signal for the start of public ceremonies and the song was taken up by those outside. On this occasion the crowd proceeded to the river [783 787] to bathe themselves. Apparently the spirit of the *reth* himself had appeared to one of the *bangreth* in a dream and had demanded that this untraditional rite of purification should take place.[3] After this the duties of the *ororo* were completed and the *kwa* Nyikir took over. *kwa* Nyikir come from Fadong north of Fashoda and are specifically concerned with the funeral dances of Shilluk *reths*[4]

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[782] [1] Fr. Hurst informs me that they travelled fast but not for long distances. They rested for the day at some village where a bull was sacrificed. Only a small party travelled with the *reth's* remains and it was noticeable that the people kept out of the way. At every large watercourse a sheep was sacrificed, again called *akadh*. The word is derived from the verb *hadho*, "to cross over."

[2] I was not present at Kujo until later, and had I been there, I should not have been allowed to witness the actual burial. The procedure was described to me later and I can only give the bare outline of what happened. I was informed that the grave is of the usual Shilluk pattern—a straight slit-trench with a side chamber below, in which the body is placed lying full length on the right side.

[177] [3] I was unable to discover where this idea originated and whether it had any special significance. I suspect Christian associations since *reth* Dak had been educated for three years at the elementary school at Doleib Hill (American Presbyterian Mission) and had retained links with them.

[173] [4] Nyikir. "Children of the Nile (Kir)." Tradition relates that these people are not Shilluk in origin but were found by Nyikang at a place called Podho Ngu ("the lion country"). Nyikang was attracted by their drumming. On Nyikang's approach they fled into the river where Nyikang captured them and made them his drummers, their specific duty being to beat the drums at the funeral wakes of all subsequent *reths*. I am indebted to Mr. J. L. Baker for this information.

Just before dawn they set up the four royal drums on end in holes specially dug in the ground[2] and in the centre of the village opposite the *kengo*. They were beaten for a short while as a signal that the public ceremonies of mourning would begin that day. In addition a fire was lit using fire sticks (*pic mac*), an important ritual item in any Shilluk ceremony, and a sheep was sacrificed.

I reached Kujo that afternoon just in time to see the *kwa* Nyikir enter the village again, singing as they came and carrying the spear of Nyikang wrapped in white cloth and also a basket which I was told contained certain sacred relics including the bell or Nyikang (*orok Nyikang*). The party stepped over a sheep held to the ground in front of them[1] and then took up their position round the drums.

Meanwhile an ox had been tethered near to the drums and a Shilluk warrior stood by, spear in hand. At a given signal he plunged his spear into the ox, missing the heart, and causing only a slight wound in the haunch, with the result that it broke away and had to be despatched outside the village. No particular attention was paid to this unfortunate incident which might have been regarded as an ill omen, and immediately the drums began to beat, the *kwa* Nyikir skipping round them four times and again stepping on to and over a sheep tethered to the ground. The main body of spectators consisting of important persons and the occupants of Kujo and neighbouring villages then entered the arena. These people carrying millet stalks, sticks and swords, but no spears, danced round the drums in an anti-clockwise direction singing the song of Nyikang followed by that of *reth* Dak Nyikang and finally a new song composed in honour of the deceased. After several minutes of dancing in this manner, the crowd moved forward and knelt facing the shrine clapping their hands as a sign of grief. These royal mourning songs reflect the Shilluks' attitude towards their kings. *Agwet wad Nyidhongo piny apath cie Yor wad Nyidhongo labo arieny*, "Agwet wad Nyidhongo, the earth is

[2] These holes are specially dug beforehand and bells and other sacred objects put beneath the drums. For normal social events Shilluk drums are laid horizontally or lean against supports set in the ground.

[1] The significance of this act is not clear and Shilluk merely say that it must be done; it is "according to custom," *kwong*. I have, however, frequently heard it said that the act, *ahadh*, is intended to remove impurities which might be harmful to the *reth*. The procedure is followed in all sorts of ritual situations in which the *reth* is concerned. It will be remembered that the *reth* steps over a bull-calf when he leaves Debalo and over a black bull at Arepejur on his way to Fashoda on the first day of the installation ceremonies. It will also be remembered that in the old days, prior to *reth* Fadiet, a man (and a girl) was subjected to the same treatment as the bulls and sheep, and, though it is not true that he invariably died in the process, he was never allowed to come into direct contact with the *reth*. See Howell and Thomson, *op. cit.*, pp. 51, 54 and p. 79, Note 21.

533 539 766 destroyed, Yor son of Nyidhongo, the country is ruined," is one of the main refrains of the song of Yor. Other songs refer to the immortality of their *reths*. Of Dak, son of Nyikang, we hear that he only vanished, he did not die. [775] Of Kweikon, who was killed in battle against the Dervishes at Jebel Gadir, they sing, *Kurjang* (Kweikon) *cie keny aboi tho nyiwang kecdi tho wadi nini,* [173] "Kurjang the fierce one, when he went out to die he did not fear, fierce one, death is only sleeping."

766 Warriors from the surrounding settlement of Fanyidwai Pac then entered in battle order, carrying their shields and spears. After a preliminary march [576] round the arena, spears and shields were discarded and only sticks and millet stalks carried. This is usual at Shilluk public ceremonies. Dances continued for three days, men of Fanyikang, Dettim, Fakang and Malakal attended and the procedure was not different. Over two hundred and eighty oxen were slaughtered for the occasion, the tails and some of the horns being hung on the fence surrounding the tomb, while the meat was consumed by the participants.

[783] On the final day, after a great show of dancing and further sacrifices, the ceremony of purification known as *dungo* (or *Yul*) took place. The *bangreth*, *nyireth* and also many other kinsmen of the late *reth* were conducted by the *ororo* into the centre of the village, where an ox was sacrificed while they sat round in the centre. According to strict Shilluk custom, this should have [177 302] been followed by a general shaving of heads. In fact, they did not do so, possibly because the ritual bathing in the river was considered sufficient purification. No satisfactory explanation for this deviation from custom was forthcoming. It is worth mentioning also that the *okak nam*, latrine, and the *bilo* (or *gol pi*) bath place, of the late *reth*, which are attached to the *gol dwong* and used by him in the past, were fenced off and guarded. Anyone approaching them was seized by the *ororo* and made to pay a small forfeit.

643 766 The *reth*-elect, Kur *wad* Fafiti, was present on the first day of the *wowo*, as a gesture of respect to his predecessor, for it is not necessary for the new *reth* to be there and he never appears in public. In particular he may not see the relics of Nyikang carried by the *kwa* Nyikir, for these are associated with the death and burial of a *reth*, not with the living.

766 The *kwa* Nyikir then set out for Debwor where a similar ceremony was to be held for the northern Shilluk. I was not myself present and am indebted to Mr. J. L. Baker for the following account.

"On November 21st, the *ororo* and *kwa* Nyikir had returned to Fashoda for the final act in the obsequies of *reth* Dak and arrived there after several days spent on the road. At about 4 p.m., as at Kujo where the actual bodily

24: Howell E-5 (1951-1952) 1953 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

The march of the armies and the mock battle

After three nights in seclusion in Debalo, during which his followers are mustering from the south, the *reth* is challenged by Nyikang to come forth to fight and messengers are sent for this purpose. Accompanied by *Nyakwer*, "the girl of the ceremonies," who plays an important part in subsequent events, by various relics of Nyikang, by his shield and spear-bearers and his army, the *reth* marches on the capital, crossing Arepejur on the way, and attacks the army of Nyikang by then drawn up just west of Fashoda. In this battle he is defeated, captured by Nyikang and carried off to the shrine of Nyikang (*Cerfuc*) nearby. 643

The substitution on the sacred stool

In front of this shrine the sacred stool of Shilluk kings, the *kwom*, is set shrouded from the public by a canopy of white cloth. Nyikang is placed upon this, but after a time is whisked away and the *reth* takes his place. This act of substitution and enthronement, perhaps the most significant act of all the ceremonies, is the point where the *reth* is possessed by the spirit of Nyikang. [778 775]

The temporary camp

Shortly after this the *reth* is carried to a temporary camp (*Adul*), where, after a sacrifice, he is washed and purified. He remains there in strict seclusion, guarded by the *ororo*. [783 644]

The vigil in Athurwic

On the next evening, he ascends into *Athurwic*[1], the imposing mound which dominates the capital and on which are four well-built houses. It is said that he is enticed there by a woman of the *ororo*, leaving *Nyakwer* behind, forgotten and neglected. After two nights, word is brought to him that Nyikang has seized her on the grounds that she has been married with cattle from the royal herd: these are his, Nyikang's property, not that of a man who has not yet been confirmed in his position as *reth*.

The final struggle with Nyikang

Challenged, the *reth* comes down from the mound with his followers, while Nyikang moves forward to attack him right in the centre of Fashoda. In a furious battle which follows, the *reth* succeeds in wresting *Nyakwer* from Nyikang and retires into *Athurwic* once more. Shortly afterwards, Nyikang ascends the mound and makes his peace with the *reth* and there follows a ceremonial inspection of the houses of the capital and fines are imposed on those clans who have not fulfilled their obligation to repair them. The *reth* has now been accepted by Nyikang whose official and public functions are over. Later he retires again to Akurwa. [614 651]

Speech Day

On the final day, the chiefs of the country assemble below the mound and the *reth*, accompanied by his drummer and shield-bearer, comes down to meet them. Each chief in turn addresses the *reth* and, after declaring his allegiance, exhort him to do his duty and to treat his people justly. The *reth* is then conducted again round the houses of Fashoda over which he now has complete control. 631 643

In this brief summary, I have drawn attention only to the most important features of the installation. There is naturally a wealth of ritual carried out at each stage of the ceremonies. From the accounts of the accession of *reth* Fafiti in 1917, *reth* Anei in 1944 and *reth* Dak in 1946, we have a clear picture of the slow and colourful process by which a *reth* is chosen and installed. Each stage has its religious and secular aspects and in the short description of the installation of *reth* Kur *wad* Fafiti which follows, it will be 643

[1] Variously spelt: *Aturwic*, *Athudowic*, *Athurwic*.

24: Howell E-5 (1951-1952) 1953 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

forth from the shrine and marched northwards to beat the bounds of Shilluk country in Muomo. The march on Fashoda then began. It is accepted custom among the Shilluk that Nyikang and his followers may seize cattle, sheep or goats which cross their path (most Shilluk are wise enough to keep them out of the way) or to demand them as offerings together with other smaller gifts from the occupants of the villages through which they pass. This licensed plundering, which is often abused beyond the bounds of piety by Nyikang's retinue, is treated by the Shilluk with admirable tolerance, for they must know that such offerings go to fill the stomachs and pockets of the *kwa* Nyikwom. It is a sacred duty cheerfully accepted. At one point on the march at Moro, however, their demands were thought to be excessive and were resisted, a demonstration which nearly ended in armed conflict and which delayed the party for a while.[*] They had left Akurwa on the 28th January and reached Adodo, south of Kodok, on the 4th February, and the next day, in accordance with custom, the *reth* fled to Debalo.

As we have seen, it is traditional for the *reth* to remain three nights in Debalo. In fact, *reth* Kur had already made it known that he did not intend to spend more than one night there, on the grounds that his father, Fafiti, had spent no more. Fafiti's break with tradition had been dictated by the fear that he might be deprived of office or killed by a rival and the natural anxiety of the administrative authorities to get through the ceremonies as quickly as possible. In those days, the likelihood of civil war was much greater and Fafiti had been urged to cut the installation ceremonies to a minimum.[**] Precedents of this kind count heavily in subsequent customary procedure and in this and in previous installations it was noticeable that each *reth* was inclined to follow the procedure of his father, not that of his immediate successor.[***] This is at least one of the explanations of the variations in detail which are apparent when we compare the installation ceremonies of those *reths* of the Shilluk of which records exist.

Reth Kur's decision to remain only one night at Debalo had two main effects. In the first place, fewer of those who seek absolution for the sins of the flesh (notably the seduction of unmarried girls) were able to attend, though I am told that about fifty persons presented themselves to the *reth* for this

[*] It appears that the effigy of Nyikang was damaged in the affray and had to be taken back to Akurwa for repairs.

[**] Mr. Udal writes: "When I visited the *reth* on the 26th January, he announced his intention of spending three nights at Debalo. However, when on the 2nd February there was still no definite news of the whereabouts of Nyikang, he did not attempt to disguise his irritation at the dilatoriness of the *kwa* Nyikwom and said he would follow the precedent of his father and sleep only one night at Debalo. Accordingly, after news of Nyikang's arrival at Adodo on the evening of the 4th February had reached Fashoda, *reth* Kur and Fafiti set out before sunrise for Debalo and it was arranged between the messengers of the *reth* and Nyikang that the battle should take place on the morning of the 6th February." *Reth* Kur's impatience may have been genuine, but I do not think he would have attempted to alter established custom if he had not the precedent of his father before him.

[***] For example, see Howell and Thomson, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

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In the meantime, I had driven along the road until, about two miles north of Fashoda, I met Nyikang, Dak and their followers moving at great speed towards the capital. I followed them for a while and then took up a good position immediately west of Fashoda in the open grass where I knew the opposing forces would meet. Nyikang soon arrived and halted, drums beating and the shield-bearer dancing forward in defiance of the *reth* and his army who were by then appearing over the crest of the northern bank of Arepejur. The *kwe* Nyikwom, armed with whips, then dashed forward and those armed with millet stalks met in a disorderly and not very spectacular clash well to the west of the main party. Then, as the *reth* and his personal guards drew near, Nyikang and Dak rushed up to him, surrounded him and bore him off towards Fashoda, while a furious battle took place between the opposing forces, the *kwe* Nyikwom lashing out with their whips without mercy.

Outside the shrine, which had been beautifully cleaned and decorated for the occasion, the royal stool (*kwom*), wrapped in white cloth, was ready. As Nyikang and his captive drew near, the white canopy was thrown around them. It was therefore not easy to see what happened, and it would have been unseemly to push behind the screen, but it was clear that the substitution had taken place a few minutes later when Nyikang withdrew into the shrine.

A short time afterwards, the *reth's* feet were bathed and he was carried to the temporary camp opposite. He emerged again almost immediately to make passes over the bull, covered in white cloth and a leopard-skin, with the traditional weapons handed to him for the purpose, and then entered *Adul* once more, while the beast was sacrificed, falling on its side about fifty yards away. The man responsible for spearing it[*] was seen running rapidly towards the river where he must wash the blood from the blade and purify himself in the water. A fire was then lit inside one of the two small huts in the camp and water was heated in which the *reth* was bathed."

This ended the first day of the installation. The *reth* was safely in seclusion within *Adul*, and although not free from danger yet, had successfully passed one of the most dangerous periods of the whole procedure. The only other ceremony performed that day was the lighting of fire outside the camp

[*] From the *kwe* Nyikoc of Limo.

[*] In conversation with Shilluk after the event, I was informed that during his stay at *Adul*, the temporary camp, the *reth* is expected to have sexual intercourse with one of his half-sisters. The custom (*kwong*) is said to derive from Dak, who, infuriated by Nyikang's action in giving his mother, Ahot, to Cal (or Bwiro, another brother), took one of his half-sisters who eventually gave birth to Ocido. Nyikang was apparently outraged by this action, but decreed that thereafter every *reth* should take one of his half-sisters. This story is recorded by Hofmayr (see Bibliography), but I had not realized that the act—a ritual breach of the rules of exogamy and called *ahwalo*—actually takes place. It is also said that members of the *kwareth* have to do likewise when they are appointed chiefs (*jago*) though it is admitted that the woman is usually a more remote kinswoman than a half-sister. The act is none the less one of incest. The matter needs further investigation.

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it was an old man who was stretched across the path for the king and his followers to step across. With such a large following, there was more stepping on, than stepping across, and the man was trampled to death.) His partisans follow suit and the whole army crosses the watercourse and marches towards Fashoda. As it does so, the supporters of Nyikang, bearing the two effigies in their midst, are seen approaching from Adodo. The two forces halt a short distance apart, threats are shouted, weapons are brandished—not spears, fortunately, but millet stalks—there is the usual preliminary feinting and dodging and half-hearted rushes, and then the two armies hurl themselves forward and join in the great mock battle. The air is thick with dust raised by the padding feet of the combatants and clouded with flying millet stalks. When the air clears it is seen that the reth is no longer at the head of his forces. His army has been defeated and he has been captured by Nyikang and carried into Fashoda.

Nyikang, closely followed by the reth, advances to an open space in front of the shrine. A cow is sacrificed and then a screen of white cloth is erected in front of the doorway of the shrine, and the sacred stool of Nyikang is placed behind it so as to be hidden from the public view. The effigy of Nyikang is put down upon the stool and a period of chanting and invocation ensues, the reth meanwhile kneeling and clasping the legs of the stool. Then Nyikang is lifted up and carried into the shrine and the reth takes his place on the stool. This is the solemn moment of the installation; it is the equivalent of the crown of kingship being placed on the head of the monarch. The Shilluk believe that at this moment the spirit of Nyikang enters into and takes possession of the body of the reth. After some time spent in communing with Nyikang, the reth, accompanied by his 'bride', who during all this time has never left his side, leaves the place of installation and moves across to a group of huts temporarily erected for his use. Another cow is sacrificed and the king enters one of the huts for the ritual washing of his feet by his wives. This bathing is done in hot and cold water and signifies that the

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king must not be 'hot' or 'cold' with his subjects, but just.

During the rest of the day the king remains in the seclusion of his temporary camp. Towards evening all fires are extinguished and new fire is made by twisting a sharpened stick in a hole made in another stick. The smouldering tinder is fanned into a bright flame, and the sacred fire is carried off to light the fires in the village.

During the next two days the reth remains in seclusion and certain secret rites are performed. On the evening of the second day he leaves his temporary camp and takes up his residence in a hut on an eminence called Aturwic, just outside Fashoda. He is traditionally 'enticed' there by a girl, and for the first time since the commencement of the ceremonies he deserts his young 'bride' who remains behind in the camp. The next morning the king remembers his bride and asks for her. He is told that she cannot be found and he sends messengers to look for her. They return and say that during the night Nyikang has come and carried her off. The king then sends to Nyikang demanding the return of the girl, but Nyikang flies into a rage and calls his army together to punish this impertinence. Nyikang and Dak now appear outside the shrine where they have lain since the morning of the installation and are joined by a third effigy, Nyikang's second son Col, who is composed of grey ostrich feathers and rope. The three effigies surrounded by their followers now aroused to a pitch of excitement by continuous drumming and dancing, advance towards Aturwic and the king and his *entourage* descend from the mount to meet the aggressors. The king advances boldly towards his opponents and hurls his millet stalk 'spear', which is a signal for a general onrush by his supporters. This time it is Nyikang who is vanquished. The 'bride' is snatched away from him and hurried up the mount to safety and in vain do the warriors of Nyikang counter-attack to recover her. At length they fight their way to the foot of the mound but then Nyikang calls a truce and quietly ascends the eminence accompanied by his sons. Apparently all is settled amicably. The reth has proved